

AFRICAN AMERICAN LEGISLATIVE DAY  
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**HOUSE BILL 1554**

**CREATING EQUITY IN FOOD STAMP ELIGIBILITY**

Presenter

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Brief Summary:

The goal of the federal food stamp program is to help low-income households have a more nutritious diet. The federal government provides funds to Washington State to administer the food stamp program for state residents. Current data shows Washington as having one of the highest rates of hunger in the nation.

Federal law denies benefits under food assistance programs to persons convicted of drug-related offenses. An individual convicted of a felony drug offense is not eligible for food stamps.

States can use an “opt out” provision to allow drug offenders to receive food stamp benefits. Under HB 1554, Washington would use this “opt-out” provision and would not prohibit an individual who has a drug-related felony offense from receiving benefits under the food program.

CAAA Supports HB1554. – A disproportionate number of convicted drug offenders in Washington are African American. No other felon is denied food stamp eligibility – only drug offenders. Child molesters, murderers and sex offenders, for example, are not prohibited under federal law from receiving food stamps. Several states have taken advantage of the opt-out provision and allow felony drug offenders access to food stamps. It is important in these distressed economic times to make food assistance widely available.